

## CHAPTER IV

### CHALLENGE TO HEDONISM

To her Diary, on July yth, 1891, a couple of months after her engagement, and a year and some weeks before her marriage, Beatrice Potter confided a survey of the possibilities of what she often calls "the firm of Webb "

Like nearly everything she writes, it is unsparingly frank, and, in the circumstances, both illuminating and characteristic

"We are both of us second-rate minds, but we are curiously combined I am the investigator and he the executant, between us we have a wide and varied experience of men and affairs We have also an unearned salary These are unique circumstances A considerable work should result if we use our combined talents with deliberate and persistent purpose "

As an expression of opinion on the part of a woman presumably in love—and that she was in love there is convincing ground for believing—this is certainly unusual As an affirmation of purpose, it is not less striking Pleasure of a personal kind out of the new association she expected and she got about this, she says nothing There was, in fact, no need to say anything The point, for her, was that it, and the "unique circumstances" that went with it, were there to be used, to produce a "considerable work " That was its justification and its end

He, who says somewhere that he is "not given to reflection"—a process he distinguished with logical accuracy from ratiocination—has confided to no one what his expectations were They were almost

certainly much